



(U) Office Manager: Jack-of-All-Trades

FROM: SIGINT Communications
Unknown
Run Date: 06/10/2003

(U) A good office manager can make a whole office function better. That's what I remind myself as I come to work every day. Our actions help keep the operational wheels spinning, in ways that may be invisible to the workforce at large... but if we did our job poorly, the effects would be very noticeable.

(U) We play many roles. We keep supervisors' calendars, arrange travel, handle visitor requests, correspondence, timesheets, action tracking, deliver mail, take care of the office equipment, budgeting, logistics and space, etc. We are often asked to serve as the OSHA representative, CWF rep and the records person.

(U) Beyond this, Office Managers make an equally important - but even more subtle - contribution, by helping to keep morale in an office high. When we greet people as they enter the room, a friendly attitude can give all visitors a more positive feeling. Often people look to us to keep them informed about what's going on. Office Managers also are a manager's eyes and ears: we can keep them aware of the concerns that the workforce has on a given issue. Our relationship with the managers is a partnership. And although it's not one of our main duties, we sometimes help arrange morale-building functions, to improve relationships and strengthen communication.

(U) What does it take to be an office manager? We used to be called Secretaries, then Office Assistants, and now Office Managers - our expectations have greatly increased. The job requires many traits: communications skills, tact, flexibility, self-starter, the ability to work independently, and negotiating skills, to name just a few! Being a "people person" is of paramount importance. One must also be able to multi-task; we are often pulled in several directions, and we must be able to switch from one action to another and back very quickly. Networking is another key skill. I often contact people if I haven't heard from them in a while - I think it's good to keep the channels of communication open.

(U) What's the best aspect of the job? I like the contact with people, for one. I also like the fact that the job is challenging, ever-changing, and fast-paced. I am always learning something new! I also enjoy assisting my coworkers and generating a solution or answer. In a conference room one day, someone asked my manager if a certain seat at the "conference table" (where the other managers were sitting) was reserved. "Yes," he said, "it's reserved for my Office Manager, [REDACTED]!" It's nice to be respected like that.

(U) The hard part of the job is that sometimes people don't fully appreciate our capabilities and take advantage of them. Office Managers are problem-solvers by profession who can handle very complex tasks; I believe we are capable of taking on even more demanding duties that will put our skills to the best use. In dealing with these issues, I have found it very helpful to have mentors. I periodically meet with three senior personnel who "know the ropes." I have learned much from them, and owe them my gratitude for helping me succeed here at the Agency.

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